

17 February 1987

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

FROM: John J. Bird
National Intelligence Officer for Warning

SUBJECT: Meeting Between NIO for Warning and Messrs. Bob Bott and Bill Hoehn
of the Senate Armed Forces Committee Staff

1. The NIO for Warning met with Messrs. Bob Bott and Bill Hoehn of the Senate Armed Forces Committee Staff and [redacted] of the Office of Congressional Affairs' Liaison Division from 1130 to 1200 hours on 17 February on the issue of warning of nuclear attack. The specific item at issue was warning of nuclear attack in relation to the deployment of the rail mobile MX missile system. The NIO for Warning described the basic warning cases of war with the Soviet Union as: a "bolt from the blue," escalation of a crisis begun by the Soviet Union, escalation of a crisis begun by nations other than the superpowers, and the deliberate buildup for war analogous to the way Hitler proceeded before his various adventures. The NIO/W noted that there seemed to be general agreement that the most likely cause of war would be as an outgrowth of a crisis either begun by the Soviets or begun by other nations but soon escalating to involve the superpowers.

25X1

2. Given the evidence on Soviet views, with the exception of the least likely case--a "bolt from the blue" an intercontinental nuclear attack--all other cases seemed likely to be conventional in nature at the outset. Moreover, it seems to be NATO's or the US's choice as to how long the war would remain conventional and that could be for a long time. In this context clear, unambiguous, "certain" warning could be given early for the deployment of any US strategic system. The Catch-22 of this rosy warning picture is that once conventional war had begun, refinement of warning of preparations for nuclear attack may not be possible, i.e., warning may be one day, one week, one month, or one year before the actual use of nuclear weapons, but that warning would not be able to, with any certainty, describe how much in advance the warning was of the actual event. The downside, then, of this warning picture is that nuclear systems for intercontinental attack would have to be survivable throughout the period, however long, of a conventional conflict.

25X1

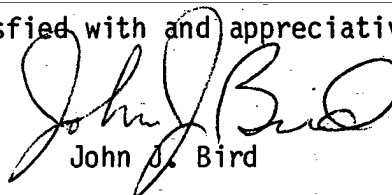
CL BY SIGNER
DECL OADR

~~SECRET~~

SECRET

25X1

4. The Senate staffers seemed satisfied with and appreciative for the briefing.


John J. Bird

cc:

Chairman, NIC

NIO/SP

25X1

SECRET